A GENUINE

ACCOUNT

OF THE

Behaviour and Dying Words

OF

WILLIAM DODD, LLD.

Who was Executed at Tyburn for FORGERY,
on FRIDAY the 27th of JUNE, 1777.

By the Reverend JOHN VILLETTE,
ORDINARY of NEWGATE.

THIRD EDITION.

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J. Villette

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WILLIAM DODD, LLD.

CUSTOM having almoſt eſtabliſhed it as a law, that the Ordinary of Newgate ſhall give the Public ſome account of convicts who ſuffer death by the laws of their country, if ſuch convicts have been by their birth, education, or particular ſpheres of action, diſtinguiſhed from the multitude, and thereby attracted the attention of the public, I find myſelf under a painful neceſſity of ſaying ſomething concerning the unhappy

William Dodd, LLD. who was executed on Friday the 27th of June, 1777. As it was the deſire of the Doctor, that if any account of his life ſhould be publiſhed, it ſhould be done by his brother and the Rev. Mr. Butler his faithful friend, who has been intimately acquainted with him and his connexions for many years paſt, and the Public have been already told in the news-papers that no other account ſhall be regarded as authentic but what may hereafter be publiſhed by theſe gentlemen, I ſhall wave ſaying any thing of him, but what naturally ariſes from the time that I, to my great grief, was under a neceſſity of becoming acquainted with him, and of paying attention to the ſtate of his mind in Newgate. My particular acquaintance commenced with him after his having received ſentence of death, when he ſent me the following card.

Saturday, Four o'Clock.

" Dr. Dodd's reſpects to Mr. Villette;
" and he will eſteem it a favor, if he will
" inform him, whether there is a ſacrament
" at the chapel to-morrow; and if there is,
" Dr. Dodd would be glad to attend; and

" would

" would eſteem it a very great favor, if Mr.
" V. would be kind enough to call upon him
" in the morning, and permit him to accom-
" pany him to the chapel."

From this time my chief acquaintance began with the Doctor, and my viſits became more frequent in proportion as the time of his death drew nearer. I had heard that his behaviour in gaol had been very trifling, and his employment very improper for a man in his terrible ſituation; but the following letter I hope will ſufficiently evidence, that he neither thought with levity of his ſtate, or had any inclination to employ his time improperly.

DEAR SIR,

" In conſequence of our converſation, I
" have peruſed *Roſſell*'s book* with attention.
" There is a great deal of good matter in it,
" but ill-digeſted, and often very ill expreſſed.
" I have been at much pains to reform what
" appeared to me erroneous, and to arrange
" what is irregular and confuſed. To ſay the
" truth, I have ſpent many hours in an en-
" deavour

* A book of devotions for the uſe of priſoners.

" deavour to render his work more uniform,
" and conſequently more uſeful. How far
" I have ſucceeded, I cannot tell; for I freely
" own to you, that his multiplicity of chaotic
" matter has often ſo entangled and perplexed
" me, that I have been ſcarce maſter of my
" own ideas, and I verily believe could have
" compoſed a work on the ſubject with leſs
" trouble than it has coſt me to reviſe this.
" And after all, I am doubtful whether the
" upſhot of the matter, in this arrangement,
" will not be the ſame with me as with thoſe
" who, under a notion of ſaving expences,
" repair, add to, and reform an old building,
" which, after all, is but an old one, and in
" the end commonly turns out as expenſive,
" though by no means ſo commodious, as
" one entirely new would have proved. Of
" this, however, you, Sir, muſt be the beſt
" judge, whoſe experience on theſe heads is
" preferable to any mere ideas of my poor
" brain, eſpecially in its preſent diſturbed
" and unſettled ſtate. Had I been maſter of
" more leiſure, or longer time, I think I
" could have made the book better, and more
" calculated to anſwer its humane deſign.

" As

"As it is, and ſolicitous as I am to improve "every moment in my preſent awful ſtate, "you will accept what I have done, as a "little tribute of my good-will to you, and "as a proof that I am deſirous, in every ſitu-"ation, to do all in my humble power to "contribute a mite to the beſt welfare of "my fellow-creatures. It does not become "me to adviſe or preſcribe to you, but I "ſhould think, if you found my improve-"ments of conſequence, ſtill heightened by "any obſervations of your own, or any other "ſerious and diſcrete clergyman, it might "be well to publiſh the book with the con-"ſent, and under the ſanction of the Cor-"poration of London, who are ever ready "to promote works calculated for the real "benefit of mankind. I could wiſh that a "ſhort *Addreſs* to my unhappy fellow priſon-"ers, which I have written, and will com-"municate to you, might be prefixed to the "work; as, perhaps, from the ſad ſingularity "of my unfortunate circumſtances, it may "gain more attention from them than the "much better labours of another perſon.

"That

"That God may bleſs and aſſiſt you in the "due performance of your doleful, but ne- "ceſſary and important office, is, Sir, the "fervent prayer of

"Your dying brother,

(In our common Lord)

"WILLIAM DODD."

During his confinement in gaol, he lived with great temperance, though he might (as he himſelf ſaid) have lived luxuriouſly, through the benevolence of his friends, whoſe kindneſs and zeal for him were beyond expreſſion. The tenderneſs of theſe his friends had a great effect upon him, and he frequently extolled the mercy of God in making his dire ſituation comfortable thro' their humanity.

From the time of his commitment, he was entirely freed from any care about his ſupport, his known, and even unknown friends, providing abundantly for him, and his gratitude on this account was teſtified upon every occaſion. The zeal and ardent wiſhes of ſome of them, which they could

not

not but diſcover, led them and him to imagine, before the order for execution arrived, that he ſhould find mercy. He gave admiſſion to the hope of not being included in the death warrant, and thus, by the intruſion of fear, he had a very diſtreſſed night before the order came; and being thereby much agitated, and anxious to know the reſult of the report, he was not well prepared for the dreadful news. * His friends, deſirous to acquaint him with the deciſion of the Privy-council in as ſoft a manner as poſſible, began to open it to him by degrees; but he requeſted them to tell him the truth, for he ſaw by their countenances how the matter ſtood. Upon my ſeeing him ſoon after, he told me that he had only indulged himſelf within three days with hope of mercy, from what had been ſuggeſted to him by his friends, as he had all along, even from his firſt entrance into the goal, given himſelf up as a loſt man.

* It cannot be much wondered at, that he at length gave way to hope, as one of his friends had ſome days before ſent him a congratulatory letter upon obtaining his pardon, which he told him he heard was procured through the interceſſion of the Prince of Wales.

He complained, when I ſaw him on Sunday morning as he lay on his bed, of a pain in his ſide: when I aſked him to what cauſe he aſſigned it, he replied, *Lethalis arundo*, and a deadly arrow indeed. He was frequently viſited, at his own requeſt, by a ſenſible and pious miniſter, and with this gentleman and the unfortunate doctor I ſpent many ſerious hours. After the effects of the firſt ſhock had ſubſided, he became more compoſed, and his mind in general intent upon the greateſt concern which can occupy a human mind, to be prepared for death.

As his ſphere in life had rendered him an object of the attention of all claſſes of men, many ſerious minds were anxiouſly concerned about him; and as numberleſs ſtories were propagated and believed to his diſhonour, a torrent of letters poured in upon him, partly from religious ſenſible people, partly from well-meaning perſons who had more zeal than knowledge. Beſides all this, books of very different contents were ſent to him; ſo that he had ſuch a collection of different ſyſtems of doctrine forced upon him in books and letters, as might diſtreſs and perplex any human being; and indeed ſome of theſe letters were written in ſuch a manner

as

as betrayed the incapacity of the writers to be of any uſe to a perſon of his knowledge and character. He was alſo viſited by perſons of very different ſentiments and complexions, but always mentioned his ſatisfaction when viſited by men of ſenſe and piety. Among others, he ſpoke reſpectfully of Mr. Weſley, and likewiſe of Mr. Romaine, who paid him a viſit a ſhort time before his death: from the laſt of theſe gentlemen he received peculiar comfort, and ſaid that they parted mutually ſatisfied. He frequently appeared to have a deep ſenſe of his paſt offences; and expreſſed, when he reflected upon the great love of God in the redemption of the world through Chriſt, his unworthineſs, and a great abhorrence of his ingratitude towards him in having deviated from him and his divine precepts: this he often did with tears. He frequently bemoaned his having brought ſuch diſhonour upon religion, and upon the ſacred function; and declared with great emotion, that if he could wipe off the offence he had thus given, he would gladly ſubmit to the greateſt tortures; and would rather die than return into the world again to offend his God, and act inconſiſtent with his holy will.

As ſeveral of the ſtories ſpread abroad againſt him came to my ears, I thought it incumbent on me to aſk him ſeveral queſtions relative to the truth of them. He anſwered me in ſuch a manner as plainly evinced that moſt of them were abſolutely falſe, or greatly and inhumanly exaggerated. As he took pleaſure to ſpeak with his friend who viſited him frequently with me, not only upon ſpeculative points of divinity, but alſo about his own feelings, he often expreſſed his willingneſs to die a natural death, but painful apprehenſions of a public execution, attended with all the tragic, and yet diſorderly, parade uſual in this country. He ſpoke of the execution of others who had ſuffered on account of their crimes, and ſaid, he did not think that heroiſm was a proper ſtate of mind for ſuch; humble hope was the higheſt they could aſpire to: heroiſm and triumph belonged to martyrs. He uttered frequently his thankfulneſs that he had enjoyed ſo much compoſure of mind, health, and comfortable reſt free from any diſtreſſing dreams, ſince his confinement, and found himſelf more happy after his detection than before. He ſaid, that he eſteemed his affliction as a fatherly correction from God, to bring him into thoſe paths

paths of rectitude from which he had for ſome years erred.

The day before his execution, he mentioned to me what a day of trial it would be, as he muſt on that day take a final leave of his dear wife, to whom he had been married 27 years, and who, he ſaid, had been remarkably affectionate to him throughout that whole period. The ſame evening going into his room with his friend, he roſe from his chair, and ſaid, Now the bitterneſs of death is over! I am ready. He then related that he had taken a tender leave of his friends, and from his deareſt friend, his wife. He ſaid, "I was much afraid of this ſcene, but it paſſed over much eaſier than I could have poſſibly imagined, and Mrs. Dodd behaved on the occaſion better than I expected: we parted as thoſe who hope to meet again." While I was gone to the other priſoner, the friend I left with him had ſome very pleaſing and moving converſation. To him he declared repeatedly, and yet with deep contrition, his readineſs to die, and that he relied wholly and confidently on the merits of his Lord and Saviour. When I joined them again, he proceeded, in the ſame calm and pleaſing manner, to teſtify his willingneſs to die; ſpoke

ſpoke of the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus with peculiar energy, and with ſuch a ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, as was a proof that he was ſincere, and that his reſignation to the execution of juſtice was not at all diſſembled, but genuine. He praiſed the Lord for the great work of redemption, by which ſinners could be ſaved; and compared the great difference between the death of the moſt renowned Heathens, who loſt all ſight of their evil actions, and that of the humble, contrite Chriſtian, who ſaw at one view the wiſdom, holineſs, and juſtice of God, and at the ſame time his infinite love and mercy in the ſalvation of ſinners by Jeſus Chriſt. He had ſometimes expreſſed his thoughts about our penal laws, that they were too ſanguinary; that they were againſt, not only the laws of God, but of nature; and that his own caſe was hard, that he ſhould die for an act, which he always declared to be wrong, but by which he never intended to injure any one individual; and that as the public had forgiven him, he thought he might have been pardoned. But now he laid all theſe thoughts touching himſelf aſide, though he continued to think in the ſame manner of the penal laws to his end.

Upon

Upon the coming in of a faithful and ſteady friend, and a clergyman, he ſaid, among other things, "I have requeſted of my friends to-day what I now requeſt alſo of you. It is poſſible that, after my death, ſome of my kind friends who have ſo earneſtly ſolicited my pardon, but in vain, and others, may charge the king and his counſellors with cruelty, and uſe improper language, out of love to me; make it known, that I declare this to be far from my thoughts: I love and honour the king; I doubt not his humanity: he and his counſellors have acted according to juſtice, and his Majeſty would have extended mercy, if he could have thought it conſiſtent with the welfare of the nation." He then lifted up his hands, and prayed, "O Almighty God, thou King of kings, bleſs our gracious king, ſupport and ſtrengthen him, eſtabliſh his throne in righteouſneſs; give peace in his day, O Lord, make an end of diſſenſion, and put a ſtop to the preſent unnatural war. O give his counſellors wiſdom, and bleſs them. Amen." The friend and clergyman having taken leave, we went to prayer, during which he ſhed many tears. When prayer was ended,

he

he ſaid, being ſtill on his knees, "O Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let a poor ſinner yet ſpeak unto thee, though unworthy: O ſtrengthen my faith, comfort and ſupport me, have mercy upon me, and forgive me my ſins, for the ſake of thy holy, precious blood. Amen."

In ſhort, his whole deportment this evening was humble and calm, and beſpoke a confidence of his future happineſs. He ſaid, that if the Lord would leave it to his choice to be now annihilated, by which means all would be over, or that he ſhould die, and ſtand the chance of eternal life or eternal miſery, he would not give up his hope of the glorious inheritance, no, not for ten thouſand worlds.

On the morning of his death I went to him, with the Rev. Mr. Dobey, chaplain of the Magdalen, who he had deſired to attend him to the place of execution. He appeared compoſed; and when I aſked him how he had been ſupported, he ſaid he had had ſome comfortable ſleep, by which he ſhould be the better enabled to perform his duty.

As we went from his room in our way to the chapel, we were joined by his friend, who had ſpent the foregoing evening with him, and alſo by another clergyman. When we

were in the veſtry adjoining to the chapel, he exhorted his fellow ſufferer, who had attempted to deſtroy himſelf, but had been prevented by the vigilance of the keeper. He ſpoke to him with great tenderneſs and emotion of heart, entreating him to conſider that he had but a ſhort time to live, and that it was highly neceſſary that he, as well as himſelf, made good uſe of their time, implored pardon of God under a deep ſenſe of ſin, and looked to that Lord by whoſe merits alone ſinners could be ſaved. He deſired me to call in the other gentlemen, who likewiſe aſſiſted him to move the heart of the poor youth, but the Doctor's words and exhortations were the moſt pathetic and effectual. He lifted up his hands, and cried out, "O Lord Jeſus, have mercy upon us, and give, O give unto him, my fellow ſinner, that as we ſuffer together, we may go together to heaven." His converſation to this poor youth was ſo moving, that tears flowed from the eyes of all preſent.

When we went into the chapel to prayer and the holy communion, true contrition and warmth of devotion appeared evident in him throughout the whole ſervice. After it was

ended, he again addreſſed himſelf to Harris in the moſt moving and perſuaſive manner, and not without effect; for he declared that he was glad he had not made away with himſelf, and ſaid he was eaſier, and hoped he ſhould now go to heaven. The Doctor told him how Chriſt had ſuffered for them; and that he himſelf was a greater ſinner than he, as he had ſinned more againſt light and conviction, and therefore his guilt was greater; and that as he was confident that mercy was ſhewn to his ſoul, ſo he ſhould look to Chriſt, and truſt in his merits.

He prayed God to bleſs his friends who were preſent with him, and to give his bleſſing to all his brethren the clergy; that he would pour out his Spirit upon them, and make them true miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, and that they might follow the divine precepts of their heavenly Maſter. Turning to one who ſtood near him, he ſtretched out his hand, and ſaid, "Now, my dear friend, ſpeculation is at an end; all muſt be real! What poor ignorant beings we are!" He prayed for the Magdalenes, and wiſhed they were there, to ſing for him the 23d Pſalm.

After

After we had waited ſome time for the officers, he aſked what o'clock it was; and being told that it was half an hour after eight, he ſaid, "I wiſh they were ready, for I long to be gone." He requeſted of his friends, who were in tears about him, to pray for him; to which he was anſwered by two of them, "We pray more than language can utter." He replied, "I believe it."

At length he was ſummoned to go down into a part of the yard which is incloſed from the reſt of the gaol, where the two unhappy convicts and the friends of the Doctor were alone. On his ſeeing two priſoners looking out of the windows, he went to them, and exhorted them ſo pathetically, that they both wept abundantly. He ſaid once, "I am now a ſpectacle to men, and ſhall ſoon be a ſpectacle to angels."

Juſt before the ſheriff's officers came with the halters, one who was walking with him told him that there was yet a little ſolemnity he muſt paſs through before he went out. He aſked, "What is that?" "You will be bound." He looked up, and ſaid, "Yet I am free, my freedom is there," pointing upwards. He bore it with Chriſtian patience, and beyond what might have been expected; and

when the men offered to excuſe tying his hands, he deſired them to do their duty, and thanked them for their kindneſs.* After he was bound, I offered to aſſiſt him with my arm in conducting him through the yard, where ſeveral people were aſſembled to ſee him; but he replied with ſeeming pleaſure, "No! I am as firm as a rock." As he paſſed along the yard, the ſpectators and priſoners wept and bemoaned him; and he, in return, prayed God to bleſs them.

On the way to execution he conſoled himſelf in reflecting and ſpeaking on what Chriſt had ſuffered for him; lamented the depravity of human nature, which made ſanguinary laws neceſſary; and ſaid he could gladly have died in the priſon-yard, as being led out to public execution tended greatly to diſtreſs him. He deſired me to read to him the 51ſt Pſalm, and alſo pointed out an admirable penitential prayer from Roſſell's Priſoner's Director. He prayed again for the king, and likewiſe for the people.

* It was done in the paſſage leading to the chapel, by order of Mr. Akerman the keeper, to prevent his being gazed at; to whom he deſired I would return his ſincere thanks for all his civilities to him, even to the laſt.

When

When he came near the ſtreet where he formerly dwelt, he was much affected, and wept. He ſaid, probably his tears would ſeem to be the effect of cowardice, but it was a weakneſs he could not well help; and added, he hoped he was going to a better home.

When he arrived at the gallows, he aſcended the cart, and ſpoke to his fellow-ſufferer. He then prayed, not only for himſelf, but alſo for his wife, and the unfortunate youth that ſuffered with him; and declaring that he died in the true faith of the goſpel of Chriſt, in perfect love and charity with all mankind, and with thankfulneſs to his friends, he was launched into eternity, imploring mercy for his ſoul for the ſake of his bleſſed Redeemer.

He delivered to me the following declaration, which he intended ſhould have been read for him by me at the place of execution; but it being thought that it could not poſſibly be heard by the multitude, it was omitted.—I therefore here give it to the Public.

Dr.

Dr. Dodd's laſt ſolemn Declaration.

TO the words of dying men regard has always been paid. I am brought hither to ſuffer death for an act of fraud, of which I confeſs myſelf guilty with ſhame ſuch as my former ſtate of life naturally produces, and I hope with ſuch ſorrow as He, to whom the heart is known, will not diſregard. I repent that I have violated the laws by which peace and confidence are eſtabliſhed among men; I repent that I have attempted to injure my fellow-creatures; and I repent that I have brought diſgrace upon my order, and diſcredit upon religion: but my offences againſt God are without name or number, and can admit only of general confeſſion and general repentance.----Grant, almighty God, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, that my repentance, however late, however imperfect, may not be in vain.

The little good that now remains in my power, is to warn others againſt thoſe temptations by which I have been ſeduced. I

have

have always ſinned againſt conviction; my principles have never been ſhaken; I have always conſidered the Chriſtian religion as a revelation from God, and its divine Author as the Saviour of the world; but the laws of God, though never diſowned by me, have often been forgotten. I was led aſtray from religious ſtrictneſs by the deluſion of ſhew and the delights of voluptuouſneſs. I never knew or attended to the calls of frugality, or the needful minuteneſs of painful oeconomy. Vanity and pleaſure, into which I plunged, required expence diſproportionate to my income; expence brought diſtreſs upon me, and diſtreſs, importunate diſtreſs, urged me to temporary fraud.

For this fraud I am to die; and I die declaring in the moſt ſolemn manner, that however I have deviated from my own precepts, I have taught others, to the beſt of my knowledge, and with all ſincerity, the true way to eternal happineſs. My life, for ſome few unhappy years paſt, has been dreadfully erroneous, but my miniſtry has been always ſincere. I have conſtantly believed, and I now leave the world ſolemnly avowing my conviction, that there is no other

name

name under Heaven by which we can be ſaved, but only the name of the Lord Jeſus; and I entreat all who are here to join with me in my laſt petition, that, for the ſake of that Lord Jeſus Chriſt, my ſins may be forgiven, and my ſoul received into his everlaſting kingdom.

June 27, 1777. WILLIAM DODD.